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AUTHOR Ferguson, Douglas K.; Pollock, Kathleen Treb
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the first year activities of the Library and Information Resources for the Northwest (LIRN) Program of the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust. LIRN is one of three regional programs of the Trust and is active in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The LIRN Program is aimed at making needed information more readily available by strengthening the capacity of libraries to collect and deliver that information through coordinated efforts. The three components of the program's overall strategy are: improving the management of collection building and coordination by supporting a regional assessment and database that shows the location and level of subject collections in American Pacific Northwest libraries; assisting with cooperative collection development and sharing agreements that selectively coordinate collection growth and strengthen the combined subject resources in the region; and demonstrating innovative approaches that will result in more rapid delivery of documents and forms of information between libraries and to the users of libraries. This first year report includes an introduction; background on the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust; a description of the LIRN program; a summary of the first year activities; accomplishments in collection development and information delivery; and a brief concluding statement. Twenty references are included. (THC)

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THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR THE NORTHWEST PROGRAM:

A FIRST YEAR REPORT

April 1984 - March 1985

Douglas K. Ferguson, Program Director
Kathleen Treb Pollock, Program Assistant

June 1985

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THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR THE NORTHWEST PROGRAM:
A FIRST YEAR REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the activities of the first year of the Library and Information Resources for the Northwest (LIRN) Program of the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust based in Portland, Oregon. LIRN is one of three regional Programs of the Trust and is active in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The first year's work represents advice and contributions from several groups and individuals. They include the Program Advisory Committee (1); task forces that worked on resource assessment, information delivery and conspectus database design; individuals from the region and around the country who participated in meetings on specific topics; and the advice of many individuals from libraries, computing centers and from colleges and universities.

Information is a critical resource for economic, educational and community vitality. The LIRN Program is aimed at making needed information more readily available by strengthening the capacity of libraries to collect and deliver that information through coordinated efforts. The reservoir of information is larger than any, even the largest, library can collect, and the technology and techniques for delivering information are more complex and costly than the resources of most libraries for managing them effectively.

THE FRED MEYER CHARITABLE TRUST

When Fred Meyer died in 1978 at the age of 92, he created through his will a charitable trust and bequeathed it approximately two million shares in a retail sales chain, Fred Meyer, Incorporated. In 1982 most of the designated funds were transferred from the estate and the Trust began its operations.

Mr. Meyer was an individual whose life and work expressed innovative ideas in retail business, hard work and self reliance. His legacy was not only a chain of stores in five states employing over 13,000 people with over one billion dollars in sales but also a foundation dedicated to the public interest.

He established the Trust with confidence in the future and in people to shape that future through their own efforts and working together. He set no binding guidelines for the foundation and vested policy making authority in five Trustees. He stated: "Realizing as I do the uncertainties of the future, I want my Trustees to be able to exercise broad discretion in shaping and carrying out charitable programs which can be tailored to fit changing conditions and problems."

The Trust has been in operation for three years. Its present assets stand at over \$170,000,000, making it one of the larger foundations in the U.S. The Trust is expending annually over \$7.5 million on grantmaking programs. A report of the first two years of grantmaking is available from the Trust (2). An annual report will be available in early fall of 1986. During the first three years of operation the Trust has awarded 196 grants, totaling over 15 million dollars.

During the early years of its development, the Trust is making grants only in Oregon, except for three regional programs covering the five states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington (3). The three regional programs focus on aging, higher education and library and information resources. The Trust's grantmaking in its first two years saw major contributions in the areas of the Arts and Humanities, Education, Health, Social Welfare and Conservation.

THE LIRN PROGRAM

With limited funds in relation to a broad range of needs, the Trust sought areas where its investments joined with the investments and ideas of others would make a difference. Based on widespread discussions and advice from education, business and community leaders, the area of information appeared to be one of growing importance to the educational and economic climate of the Pacific Northwest.

While the Information Age is much discussed today, it means many things to many people. To some it means the computer revolution, to others it is a shift in the labor force from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, to others it is dramatic growth in communication and media, and to others it means a transformation of organizations such as libraries into vital and active information management centers.

The Trust selected libraries as the focus of a regional program for the role they can play in strengthening educational and economic opportunity. Libraries reflect the creation of knowledge capital over a period of decades and centuries. Libraries have enormous resources that can become active information assets. Finally, libraries have at least one characteristic that makes them future-oriented organizations. They know how to work together to serve the clientele of each by drawing on the resources of all.

Yet the needs of libraries are as broad and deep as the organizations and the people they serve. Rather than focusing on organizations one at a time and funding building needs, buying books for individual libraries or supporting computer systems, the Trust chose a specific strategy. This strategy enhances the collective capacity of libraries to build and deliver information resources together.

The LIRN Program has three components to its overall strategy:

- * Improving the management of collection building and coordination by supporting a regional assessment and database that shows the location and level of subject collections in American Pacific Northwest libraries.

- * Assisting with cooperative collection development and sharing agreements that selectively coordinate collection growth and strengthen the combined subject resources in the region.

- * Demonstrating innovative approaches that will result in more rapid delivery of documents and other forms of information between libraries and to the users of libraries.

The Program, therefore, focuses on collection resources and on the effective delivery of those resources as usable information. The Program objectives in building collections involves creating new management information for libraries to coordinate their collections so that more books, journals and other materials are available, known and used in the region. The objectives in information delivery involve improving the system of interlibrary delivery within the region and to the region from national information centers and neighboring states (4).

A solid groundwork for realizing these objectives has been produced in the first year of the Program.

SUMMARY OF FIRST YEAR ACTIVITIES

1. A regional collection assessment methodology produced by the Resources Assessment task force.
2. Two hundred and forty libraries committed to participating in the regional assessment.
3. A database design for storing and analyzing the assessment findings, prepared by a technical task force.
4. Training specification prepared and a project initiated to train over 350 staff to collect data for input to the regional database.
5. A Request for Proposals distributed and proposals received to produce a Directory of Special Information to complement the assessment.
6. A review of delivery strategies produced by the Information Delivery task force.
7. National inventory of library telefacsimile services produced and distributed in the region and nationally.

8. Project initiated to map existing and planned communication and delivery paths in the Pacific Northwest.
9. Project initiated to plan for more effective delivery of agricultural information.
10. A Request for Proposals for information delivery demonstration projects distributed throughout the region.

These results were produced with broad participation by individuals from all five states and from the public and private sectors through: a Program Advisory Committee that reviewed progress at three meetings; three task forces that collectively held ten meetings and involved over thirty specialists; and five additional meetings on various aspects of the Program.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT: THE FIRST YEAR

In the first year a collection assessment or mapping approach adapted to the needs of the region was developed; a description and invitation to participate was widely distributed; libraries reviewed that prospectus and made decisions to profile or assess their collections; a training program was initiated; a database was specified to display and analyze the assessment information; and proposals were requested for a directory of special information collections in the region.

The assessment approach, the training program and the directory specifications were prepared with the assistance of a task force of distinguished librarians (5). Public and special library collections and users interact with academic library collections and users especially in a region with dispersed collections and populations such as the Pacific Northwest. Therefore the Trust expanded the LIRN program to include those public and special libraries that decide to participate in the assessment and collection coordination aspects of the Program. The assessment task force composition reflected the five state aspect of the Program and included academic, public and special librarians.

The assessment approach drew on the experience and techniques of the Research Libraries Group's (RLG) "conspectus" (6), the Alaska Collection Development Project (7), the Association of Research Libraries North American Collections Inventory Project (NACIP) (8) and on the work of other groups of libraries. A rating scheme developed by RLG, used by NACIP and adapted by Alaska for use by all types of libraries was incorporated into the Pacific Northwest Assessment. Subject collections are rated at various levels of detail using the Library of Congress and Dewey classification schemes. Numbers ranging from one to five are assigned to describe subject collections on a continuum from minimal to comprehensive.

Training in assessing subject collections is important to the quality of the data collected and to the effective use of the data. Therefore, the task force devoted considerable effort to recommending the effective elements of training. The elements are: a group of resource specialists/trainers developed in the region, training groups held locally in the five states and taught by the trainers, and followup to assist with problems and the development of good teaching materials. All these requirements were incorporated into a detailed training specification (9). The University of Washington Graduate School of Library and Information Science was awarded a grant to produce and deliver the training between April 1985 and February 1986. Barbara Tolliver is the training project director.

A prospectus describing the Pacific Northwest Collection Assessment was issued in early January, 1985 (10) and by April about 240 libraries had sent in written commitments to participate. This exceeded the most optimistic estimates by about 50%, and posed some unique scheduling, planning and resource allocation problems. About forty percent of the libraries are academic, 35% are public and 20% are special libraries. About 2/3rds of all academic libraries are participating, 2/3rds of the largest public libraries, 1/4th of the largest special libraries, 3/4ths of all university libraries, 1/2 of all community college and private college libraries and 3/4ths of all state system libraries.

To be useful in managing individual collections and coordinating collection development, the assessment data must be incorporated in a database similar to the RLG conspectus database from which collection assessment reports are produced. A task force of collection and technical specialists developed the specification for such a database to be used in selecting an organization to develop a database service (11). This database service, known as the Pacific Northwest Conspectus Database, will receive collection ratings on standard worksheets from individual libraries and will produce reports for individual libraries, for groups of libraries, for subject collections, and in other report formats to be determined. Pilot operation is expected to begin in the fall of 1985 and full operation will begin early in 1986.

The computer-based union cataloging systems (e.g. OCLC, RLIN, WLN) record title-by-title information. In contrast the conspectus database documents and displays the level and location of subject collections. The task force recommended that a directory of significant and often unique special purpose collections would provide improved access and management information for both the users and staffs of libraries in the region. Therefore a request for proposals was developed and issued in February for a Directory of Special Information Collections in the Pacific Northwest (12). An award will be made in Spring of 1985 to survey collections and produce a directory early in 1986 for distribution to a wide variety of libraries in the region. The directory will be in printed and diskette form and will describe and index social, economic and other information collections in libraries and information centers.

Finally, to contribute to improving staff assessment skills, the Trust approved small grants to each of the five state libraries to assist individuals from participating libraries, to attend a major collection development institute in Seattle in September, 1985. It is expected that about half the attendees at the four day institute will receive some assistance from these grants.

In the second Program year assessment training will be completed, the assessment database will be in full operation, reports will be produced for participating libraries and they will begin using the assessment data and process to explore improved collection management and collection coordination. The Program will assist with the process of using the collection data for coordinating collections and will begin to identify ways to effectively support such efforts (13).

INFORMATION DELIVERY: THE FIRST YEAR

As individual library collections contain a smaller percentage of the growing store of available publications, interdependencies among collections becomes an imperative for many libraries. The collection development strategy of the Program is based on this premise. Interdependent collections require delivery links that reduce the time and space barriers to accessing remote collections.

Faster delivery systems between libraries are an added incentive to creating a larger combined library resource in the region. A state-of-the-art meeting held in September reviewed national projects and selected technologies with potential for improving information delivery. A task force on information delivery was appointed in October to assist in assessing the issues and developing a strategy (14). The members represented backgrounds in library management, computing, telecommunication and higher education administration.

In January a report was completed summarizing the discussions of the task force, and it included the following points (15). Improvement in the speed and effectiveness of delivery is not just a simple matter of substituting newer technology for older technology, for example telefacsimile for mail delivery. Processing of requests for documents may have to be revised, staff may require training in new equipment, and cost/performance tradeoffs will need to be analyzed. Demonstration projects offer the best means for libraries to field test new approaches with real problems and actual users in ways that can be sustained.

Three areas of technology emerged as particularly problematic for information delivery in the region as well as the nation. First, telefacsimile projects indicate significant unit cost and equipment management problems, and it was unclear as to the national diffusion of equipment in the library community. Secondly, video and optical digital disk technologies seemed to offer potential for mass storage and distribution of full text and graphics. However, there is little if any field experience with equipment and services in any but the largest national libraries (16). Third, a number of telecommunication systems including satellite and microwave are under development even as existing telecommunication costs are rising sharply.

To begin addressing these issues the LIRN Program supported the following activities. A national inventory of library telefacsimile sites was commissioned, compiled as a directory and distributed in the region and to major national libraries and information centers in March (17). Several regional library administrators attended a meeting to review possible participation in a proposed University of California field test of optical disk units containing federal data and information. The consensus was that the project would not be ready to begin for at least a year and participation should be reviewed at that time. A grant was awarded to the Oregon Graduate Center, to inventory and map existing and proposed means for delivering text and text graphics in the five states. The report will be available in the third quarter of 1985.

As the first year came to a close a program announcement was developed requesting proposals to demonstrate improved information delivery (18). This program announcement requests proposals from groups of libraries and from groups including libraries for projects that demonstrate ways to speed the delivery of information between organizations to those who can benefit from the information. Projects may involve libraries and other organizations with a major information service component to their mission and activities. Delivery mechanisms may involve the use of newer information technologies, improved management systems, new sources of information, efforts to target information to particular audiences or a combination of these. Fifteen page preliminary proposals are to be submitted by July 1, 1985.

The focus of the Program's support will be on projects that explore and demonstrate innovative, productive and cost-effective ways to improve information delivery between information service points in different organizations. Projects that incorporate one or more of the following elements are strongly encouraged.

Ways that library professionals can work with professionals in other service organizations to identify needs for rapid delivery and to meet those needs economically.

Ways to use and fund fee-for-service or priced information sources in conjunction with library sources to deliver information more rapidly.

Ways that groups of libraries can build working relationships with libraries and information centers outside the region to speed delivery of information to the region.

Ways that rapid delivery services can be made more visible to a community of users and in particular to key decision-makers and influential groups.

Ways for library managers and staff to gain and improve entrepreneurial skills in planning, implementing and operating rapid delivery services.

The Program cannot fund the replication of such projects everywhere they are needed. Instead, the Program will emphasize support to model projects, the results of which can be disseminated to other organizations. By encouraging innovation and the demonstration of alternative approaches, the Program expects that it can promote long-range benefits to the information delivery capacity of the region. An important consideration in selecting grantees will be the plans and potential of the project to instruct others in how to provide more efficient and effective information delivery services.

Yet the technical capacities of equipment and the organizational requirements for using that equipment effectively are only part of the picture. The changing character of telecommunication costs, the efforts required to interconnect disparate systems, the rapid obsolescence of equipment, the burgeoning information marketplace and the uncertainties of compensation requirements under existing copyright or intellectual property law present formidable challenges to financial planning for libraries and the organizations they serve (19).

If the lessons of demonstration projects in information delivery are to be applied widely, the underlying financial and policy questions must be addressed. Therefore in the second program year, innovative ideas will be sought to address issues that affect the long range abilities of organizations to support changes in the modes and and in the uses of the technologies of information delivery.

CONCLUSION

The expanding store of information and information technologies suggests a strategy of coordinated planning and cooperative service among coalitions of libraries. In the past much cooperative information service was often informal and frequently based on federal grant funds. Such funds are disappearing and the cost of collections and technology now indicate that cooperative collection building and delivery must be an explicit strategy for some, but not necessarily all, libraries (20). Such options for cooperation hold great promise of serving more people with more information using increasingly stable financial resources.

References

- (1) Members of the Advisory Committee are listed in a Program Announcement dated June 25, 1984.
- (2) Fred Meyer Charitable Trust, Report, Vol. 1, January 1985.
- (3) Fred Meyer Charitable Trust, Information for Grant Applications, January, 1985.
- (4) Ferguson, Douglas K., "Progress Report on the Fred Meyer Trust Program," PNLA Quarterley. Vol. 49, No. 1, Fall 1984, pp. 36-38.
- (5) Members of the Resources Assessment Group are listed in a Program Announcement dated October 19, 1984.
- (6) Gwinn, Nancy E. and Paul H. Mosher, "Coordinating Collection Development: the RLG Conspectus," College and Research Libraries, Vol. 44, No. 2, March, 1983, pp. 128-139.
- (7) Lesh, Nancy and B. Jo Morse (eds.), Alaska is a Library, Anchorage, Alaska, University of Alaska Library, 1984. For a recent summary of the Alaska work see Dennis Stephens, "The Alaska Statewide Collection Development Project," presented at a symposium on Coordinating Cooperative Collection Development: A National Perspective, April 1-2, 1985 Chicago, IL.
- (8) Reed-Scott, Jutta, Manual for the North American Inventory of Research Collections, Washington, D.C., Association of Research Libraries, 1985.
- (9) "Resource Assessment Training Specifications," LIRN Program Document, January 22, 1985.
- (10) Mapping Information Resources in the Pacific Northwest: An Invitation to Participate, LIRN Program Document, December, 1984.
- (11) "Specification for the Pacific Northwest Conspectus," LIRN Program Document, April 22, 1985.
- (12) "Request for Proposals to Conduct a Survey and Produce a Directory of Special Information Resources in the Pacific Northwest," LIRN Program Document, February 6, 1985.
- (13) For a public library administrator's view of the LIRN Program see, Anne Haley, "The Pacific Northwest Collection Assessment Project," and for an academic library point of view see, Dennis Stephens, "The Alaska Statewide Collection Development Project," both presented at a symposium on Coordinating Cooperative Collection Development: A National Perspective, Sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Higher Education, April 1-2, 1985, Chicago, IL.

- (14) Members of the Information Delivery Group are listed in a Program Announcement dated November 29, 1985.
- (15) "Contributions of the Information Delivery Group," LIRN Program Document, February, 1985.
- (16) Information Systems Consultants, Inc., Videodisc and Optical Digital Disk Technologies and their Applications in Libraries, Washington, D.C., Council on Library Resources, March, 1985.
- (17) Directory of Telefacsimile Sites in Libraries in the U.S. Portland, Oregon, Library and Information Resources for the Northwest Program, April, 1985.
- (18) "Request for Proposals to Demonstrate Improved Information Delivery," LIRN Program Document, April 25, 1985.
- (19) For a recent review of policy issues, see Mary W. Ghikas, "Public and Private Sector Issues in Document Delivery," Interlending and Document Supply, Vol. 13, No. 1, January, 1985, pp. 8-12.
- (20) For a discussion of the benefits and the problems of coordinated collection building see Paul H. Mosher and Marcia Pankake, "A Guide to Coordinated and Cooperative Collection Development," Library Resources and Technical Services, October/December 1983, pp. 417-431.

All of the above LIRN Program documents and announcements are available from the Library and Information Resources for the Northwest Program, 2125 SW Fourth Ave, Suite 202, Portland, Oregon 97201. Please include a typed mailing label with your request.